

GER: M.J. HILLENBRAND DEPARTMENT OF STATE

(39) M-667 Memorandum of Conversation

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SUBJECT: Comparison of Quemoy with Berlin

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PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Wilhelm C. Grewe, German Embassy
The Secretary
Mr. Frederick W. Jandrey - EUR
Mr. Martin J. Hillenbrand - GER

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At his request Ambassador Grewe called on the Secretary today to discuss primarily the de Gaulle proposals (see separate memorandum of conversation). However, Grewe thereafter also noted that he had been instructed to express German concern over comparisons being made between Quemoy and Berlin. He had already taken the occasion of his recent meeting with Mr. Murphy to express this concern. What particularly bothered his Government was that, if there were to be any change in American plans involving, for example, withdrawal of forces from Quemoy, there might be unfavorable repercussions on our position in Berlin. Grewe said that he had been satisfied with the explanations given by Mr. Murphy, but would be glad to have the Secretary's views on this subject.

The Secretary commented that Quemoy and Matsu were militarily indefensible, which was likewise the case with Berlin. Nevertheless, we were prepared to defend them. Grewe commented that this was much appreciated in Berlin. The Secretary continued that he would not conceal from the German Ambassador that, if American policy were to be dominated by those who tried to find excuses for falling back, and this became the general mood, the same school of thought might find itself in the same frame of mind about Berlin. Such a mood was contagious. This was one reason why the German Government should back American policy. Many columnists and other critics of our policy were prepared to fall back and back until they were all the way back home. No one who has an area to be defended by us should favor our falling back in the Far East. This would only encourage the very forces that would ask "Why should we risk war over Berlin?" We are willing to take such a risk wherever the Communists are trying to invoke force in order to obtain something which they did not have before. The Allies must stand

together

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together on this. The Secretary referred to the recent Spaak statement in Boston, to which he had alluded in his recent press conference, stressing the need to stand together. It was therefore important, if the United States were expected to carry out its commitments in Berlin, that it not be urged to give way elsewhere.

Grewe said he could assure the Secretary that the American position had German Government support. In response to a query from the Secretary as to whether this had been made clear, Grewe said he was not certain. The Secretary emphasized that it would be helpful if the German Government could make its support clear. We would like to have something we could point to. Many critics of American policy have claimed that we have no support elsewhere in the free world. Hence, this was important. Grewe said he would try to get something.

Far Eastern Situation

In reply to Ambassador Grewe's request for some general indication of what American policy on Quemoy and Matsu might be, the Secretary stated that the President has felt it not necessary or prudent to have so large a percentage of Chinese Nationalists forces (upwards of 1/3 and probably the best) in an advanced position on the islands. This view was presented quite strongly to Chiang in 1955. If a period of quiet ensues and no further attempt is made to take the islands by attack, we hope we can induce the Nationalists to reduce the size of their forces thereon. However, we have no idea of abandoning the islands to the Communists. After all there are some 45,000 Chinese civilians on Quemoy as well as several thousand more on Matsu, and it is not American practice to abandon people to the Communists. The Korean War was prolonged some eighteen months because of our refusal to return prisoners against their will. The Secretary continued that the Communists pretend the Nationalist forces are on Quemoy and Matsu in order to stage an attack on the mainland. This is the last place in the world they would be put for such purposes. The Amoy Coast is surrounded by high mountains and any landings along it could not go anywhere.

The American view is that it would be easier to hold the islands if the supply problem could be reduced by cutting down the number of people on the islands. The primary danger to them came from interdiction of supply rather than from direct assault. We are not in a position, however, to work this out until it is clear what the Communists' intentions are. One theory is that their ammunition has been depleted and their guns worn out, and that the present cease fire is merely a breather giving them an opportunity to gain political advantage by trying to split apart the Nationalists and the United States.

The Secretary added that some have complained that the offshore islands have been used by the Nationalists to interfere with coastal shipping. This has not been the case for some time, although three years ago there was some interference with shipping into Amoy. Likewise some commandos were put ashore at one point but these were wiped out. Steps could be taken to ensure that no provocative use were made of the islands, at the same time that steps were taken to

reduce

reduce the forces, though not the strength, of the Nationalists on the islands.

This is what we are thinking, the Secretary commented, but these views have not yet been coordinated with the Chiang Government. Communist propaganda is attempting to drive a wedge between the Nationalists and us by emphasizing, for example, that the Secretary's last press conference meant we were trying to abandon the offshore islands. The danger was that Formosa would be lost by defection. We could not press the Nationalists so hard that they turn against us. Hence the situation must be handled carefully. We must gain the support of world opinion, but not lose the Nationalists in the process. The Communists have said their goal is to force the United States out of the Western Pacific. We feel that we have a right to be there. If the feeling became general that we were moving out, the result would be a panic in that area where the people tend to look to the stronger. Our position would be lost in all of Asia.

Grewe asked whether we were considering a change in the general status of Formosa, for example, in the direction of a so-called "Two Chinas" policy. The Secretary commented that this was a favorite of the intellectuals and critical columnists, but it was unrealistic in practice.